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**Directors' Conference 2001 IBTS Prague
15-20 May 2001**

'The pastor as missionary leader'

We live in challenging times; times in which leadership in the church and leadership in mission are needed to help the church fulfill her missionary mandate. Churches need missionary leaders. How can pastors be missionary leaders and lead the churches to balanced missionary involvement in society and help equip the people of God? What kind of leadership does this involve? What are the biblical and theological assumptions of this kind of leadership? These questions and more will be on the agenda during this conference. A great opportunity for pastors and church workers!

For more information contact Dr René Erwich at IBTS.

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*. Why another theological journal? If you go into some theological libraries you may conclude that the field is well covered. However, the purpose of this journal is not to duplicate what is being done. Rather it is to give Baptists in Europe the opportunity to explore issues of theology and practice that are relevant to them.

In the past ten years there have been massive changes in Europe. The political landscape has changed dramatically. For European Baptists, one of the most far-reaching changes has been the increasingly significant part being played by the Baptist communities in Central and Eastern Europe. This journal will have as one of its concerns a European-wide dialogue between Baptists and others which will engage with the different traditions from which we draw, Eastern, Central and Western.

The *Journal of European Baptist Studies* is being launched by the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in Prague, Czech Republic. This institution is responsible to the European Baptist Federation, which draws together over fifty national Baptist Unions. Leaders and scholars within a number of those Unions have indicated to the IBTS Rector and teaching staff that they believe IBTS has a role in facilitating the publishing of the work of Baptist scholars.

In each issue of the journal, therefore, there will be articles by Baptist scholars. The themes to be addressed will be of particular relevance to Baptists, although it is hoped that the journal will be read by a wider public. It will aim to encourage a range of people to write – seminary teachers, other academics, research students and Baptist denominational leaders and members. This will not be a journal that is limited to one specialised area. Articles will cover biblical, theological, missiological and historical study that relates to Baptist life and thought.

This first issue illustrates the way in which it is hoped the journal will make a contribution. Keith Jones, the Rector of IBTS, has written and spoken on Baptist ecclesiology and his article in this issue addresses questions that Baptists are facing today as they reflect on their tradition. He explores the challenge to Baptists to express church life in authentic ways. The struggles which Baptists have over 'being local churches' are not new. István Gergely analyses the tensions that there were in the early period of Baptist witness in Hungary. The question of identity that is raised by this article is still acute. In the early Hungarian context Baptists were to a large extent a Germanic import and, as Gergely shows, it was difficult to move away from German-speaking leadership and worship. Often Baptists

in the East today are seen as a foreign sect. More needs to be done to explore indigenous baptistic roots. More also needs to be done, as Dr Parush Parushev argues in his article, to understand the different ways in which theological education is perceived. He has opened up a new area of east-west study which will be vital for the future.

Those who write for this journal will be free to express their own views. Sometimes these may not be the views of IBTS or of the European Baptist Federation. Indeed it would be difficult to state any one EBF view on some of the issues that will be covered. It is the hope of those involved in teaching at IBTS, however, that this new journal will attract articles that will contribute to the growth and health of Baptist witness in Europe today.

The Revd Dr Ian Randall

*Director of Baptist and Anabaptist Studies
IBTS*

**European Baptist Theological Teachers' Conference, 21-25 June 2001
at IBTS, Prague**

Every two years there is a conference for Baptists who teach theology in seminaries and schools throughout Europe and the Middle East. The theme of the 2001 conference, to be held at IBTS, is 'Doing Theology in the New Europe'. There are new challenges facing those involved in Baptist theological education and this conference will seek to respond to some of them.

Challenges come from various directions, but this conference will examine three key areas: challenges from the Church, from Society and from the Academy. Taken together, these make it clear that doing theology and undertaking theological education will have to be done in a way that is public, responsible and constructive. Good theological work must be relevant to the ministry of the churches, the needs of society and the questions raised by the academy.

There will be three major lectures, each relating to one of these three areas. These will bring perspectives from Eastern and Western Europe. In addition there will be workshops, which will consider the over-arching topics in greater detail.

Seminars will also be held in which theological educators will meet to discuss matters of concern within their own subject areas – Old Testament, New Testament, Theology, Missiology, Pastoralia and Church History.

Johnny Jonsson

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RETHINKING BAPTIST ECCLESIOLOGY

The famous Baptist historian, the late Dr W H Whitley, always started any survey about Baptists with the remark 'the distinctive feature about Baptists is their doctrine of the Church.'¹ In recent times various Baptist theologians have sought to identify and mark out a combination of theological assertions which might be said to characterise the people called Baptists². Here I note six Baptist characteristics and would make the point that whilst none of these are unique to Baptists, in combination they represent a specific identity for us. These six characteristics are:

- The desire to remodel the church in line, as far as possible, with what we presume the New Testament church to have been like;
- The idea of a covenant as the basis of church life made between those people God is gathering as members of the church;
- The congregation having the authority to take decisions regarding the life of the community, rather than an ordained and separated person;
- Believers' baptism as the way of entry into the membership of the church;
- The church as a missionary community;
- The separation of church and state.

I would say that Baptists³ have not always stressed the centrality of ecclesiology as a key theme as strongly as Whitley did. Indeed, issues about baptism, or scripture, or ministry have been more important to some.

However, though some Baptists have wanted to lay the emphasis elsewhere, many have realised and affirmed that it is the doctrine of the church, which is the defining conviction around which much of our identity is focused. Henry Cook, for instance, a British Baptist apologist, writing in 1947 says: 'Baptism, as Baptists understand it, becomes meaningless.... without this clear doctrine of the Church.'⁴

Walter Shurden, an American, says the Baptist vision of the church proclaims the essence of the Church as both human and divine, and then quotes the British Baptist Union statement on the Doctrine of the Church

¹ W T Whitley *A History of the British Baptists*, (London, Second (revised) edition. 1932), p. 4.

² For an example of this attempt to identify Baptist characteristics see James Wm. McClendon Jr. *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Abingdon Press, 1986), pp. 27ff.

³ I define Baptists here as those groupings of churches generally organised within Unions or Conventions and related to the Baptist World Alliance, not the larger grouping of baptistic churches within the believers' church, gathering church, or free church family.

⁴ Henry Cook *What Baptists Stand For* (London, 1947) p. 32.

(issued in 1948),⁵ commenting that this is a 'magnificent statement.... Do not let the fact that this essay is fifty years old keep you from a careful and critical study. It is one of the clearest statements on a Baptist perspective of the church available'.⁶

Shurden, of course, is at the heart of the debate amongst some Baptists in the current struggle to define a baptist way. His comments feature in one of a series of books developing a 'Baptist vision', published by the Baptist publishers Smyth and Helwys. I make that point to indicate that the reflection on the nature of our ecclesiology, and what it means in practice, is a vital one for us today in Europe.⁷ Here we come to a key issue, which should fundamentally affect the sort of model of our own life of discipleship and pattern of ministry.

Albert Wardin, writing in the invaluable reference book *Baptists Around the World*, (1995),⁸ which arose out of the work of the Heritage Commission and the Doctrine Commission of the Baptist World Alliance, comments -

Throughout their history Baptists have held to a number of basic principles which clearly set them aside from other major Christian bodies, while at the same time holding to Christian doctrines which place them within the mainstream of Christian faith.⁹

Wardin thus reminds us of the importance of what Dr Alexander McLaren did at the founding of the Baptist World Alliance in London in 1905 when he got the assembly to stand and recite the Apostles Creed together. Baptists are very catholic and orthodox (with small c and o) in terms of their theology. Baptists belong to the mainstream of Christianity. Whether the Baptist World Alliance Congress, meeting in Birmingham, England, in 2005 will repeat the action of McLaren one hundred years previously, waits to be seen.

Baptists, says Wardin, along with earlier Anabaptists and Mennonites, insist that the local church is composed only of baptized believers, and membership must be voluntary, thereby rejecting parish churches and infant baptism, as well as union of church and state in a religious coercion. Such principles place Baptists in what has been denominated as the 'Believers' church'. As Wardin says: 'Baptists were also the first to link

⁵ Walter B Shurden (editor) *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: The Church*, (Macon, Georgia, 1996).

⁶ Roger Hayden (editor) *Baptist Union Documents 1948 - 1977* (London, 1980), pp. 4ff.

⁷ This point was made by brother Pjotr Konovalchik, President of the Russian Baptist Union at a conference on Baptist identity organised by IBTS in Praha, February 2000.

⁸ Albert Wardin (ed.) *Baptists Around the World*, (Nashville, Tennessee, 1995).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

them in a distinct configuration and were generally more consistent and radical in applying them than other groups.¹⁰

Although all Baptist groups continue to hold to these principles, ironically today their interpretation and application are causing serious division amongst Baptists themselves. They are, therefore, worthy of further exploration within the European Baptist Federation (EBF) family.

The one, holy, catholic church

Let me start by setting out the catholic/orthodox view which Baptists hold of the Church. Here, again, I use these words with lower case letters to make clear I am not writing simply about the Roman Catholic Church and the various autocephalous national Orthodox Churches. I will always refer to the Roman Catholic Churches or the Eastern Orthodox Churches in that way. When I use the terms without any prefix I am writing theologically in the context of the whole Christian tradition. So, we claim to be part of the one holy catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our position, set out since the first Baptist Confessions of Faith, is that we believe in the holy catholic church as the holy society of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, which he founded, of which he is the only head and in which he dwells/lives by his Holy Spirit. Therefore, though there are many congregations or communions of believers organised in different ways and scattered in different parts of the world, yet that Church is one in him (the words expressed thus come from a reply of the British Baptist Union Assembly to the appeal by the Anglican Lambeth Conference of 1926 about possible talks on union). We want to assert that the Church (all these local congregations/churches) is a chosen instrument of God's divine purposes in history.

In 1993, the EBF authorised for circulation and discussion a paper on Baptist identity, expressing this view of the church: 'We understand the Church to be a fellowship of believers, sharing the table of the Lord.'¹¹ Here is expressed something of the **universal** dimension of the church as understood by Baptists and its **local** expression as a fellowship of believers meeting around the communion table.¹²

The origins of the church

Baptists have always and consistently declared that the origin of the church is in the Gospel - in the mighty acts of God in the Incarnation, Ministry, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ and

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹ European Baptist Federation discussion document *What are Baptists?* (Didcot, 1993)

¹² In the IBTS Chapel we meet around the communion table with cup, plate and open Bible placed upon it, as a theological sign reflecting the EBF Statement.

in the Descent of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is the power of God in Christ which created the church and which sustains it through the centuries. Baptists have wanted to argue strongly that Christ created the church, but have been wary about asserting that Christ also formally organised it in one clear and unchangeable way.

I have found much illumination in the writings of Professor James Dunn who explores the life of those early Christian communities, particularly in his book *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*.¹³ There he helps us understand some of the core principles around which local churches were formed, and how and what held them together in a wider network of support and belief; how they could all be described as Christian churches. It is not my place to go into that in this article, but merely to draw out some key themes, which I will use as I make points about our ecclesiology.

The New Testament churches were interdependent, relating together through the ministry of visitors (Baptists would later talk about Messengers) and round a common proclamation and a small number of common activities. I note, following James Dunn, that these were not a set of detailed decisions and proclamations covering every eventuality, as some later Christian traditions developed (the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic or Anglican churches, the requirements to say the Divine Office of the Eastern Orthodox or even the Constitution, Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church).

Dunn says they coalesced around a common declaration, which took time to develop and focus, that Jesus, the crucified Messiah, was now the Risen and Ascended Lord. Beyond that, there was a variety of expression of the church – from the group in Jerusalem, through the missionary-minded church of Antioch, the enthusiastic church in Corinth, the organised church of the pastorals, the subversive church of Revelation, the submissive church in Rome etc.

What does arise is a focus which Baptists have found and continually emphasised, that it is in a believer joining with other believers in one place as a local fellowship/koinonia that the one holy catholic church becomes significant. Indeed, such gathering¹⁴ companies of believers are the local manifestation of the one Church of God on earth and in heaven. So, we find the Church at Ephesus is described in words which some might say strictly belong to the whole catholic church as ‘the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood’ (*Acts 20:28*). This begins to draw out a key point of Baptist ecclesiology about the vital relationship to Christ

¹³ James D G Dunn *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, (London, 1977).

¹⁴ I use the word ‘gathering’ rather than ‘gathered’ as a pointer towards the dynamic, changing and incomplete life of the pilgrim church. Cf. *My A Believing Church* (Didcot, 1998).

which is implied in full communicant membership in a local church, and carries with it membership in the Church (capital c) which is at one moment in time and eternity and both militant and triumphant. To worship and to serve in such a *koinonia* of believers is, we argue, for Baptists, the essence of the life of faith.

The gathering church

I have changed a typical Baptist word in talking about the local community of believers where traditionally Baptists have spoken about the 'gathered church'; this is in distinction to the territorial church. Baptists assert that people are drawn into communities of faith, gathered by the activity of God through his Holy Spirit. It is not an accidental thing, nor is it an automatic thing, but it is 'a call' as people then freely make response. I have changed the word 'gathered' to 'gathering' in a number of articles I have written, and it has sparked off, amongst some, a demand that I unpack this change.¹⁵ If we talk about the 'gathered' community of believers, there is a sense of finality, completeness about it. I think that has sometimes prevailed as an attitude in our European Baptist churches. So, I have reflected on substituting 'gathering' as an active model, suggesting it is not yet complete; others might join; it is in the process of being formed. These churches are formed of those being gathered by the will of Christ, and live and are energised by the Holy Spirit. This was asserted in the Assembly, or Second London Confession of 1677.¹⁶

So, I would argue, these points emerge:

- Churches are gathering by the will of Christ;
- Churches do not have their origin primarily by human resolution;
- Churches are being formed out of believing people responding to the Lord's command;
- Membership is not a private option – discipleship involves both church membership and a full acceptance of the importance of the church and the duties of participating.

Other models of church

Many have tried to categorise and systematise the main patterns/types of ecclesiology. On the whole, classic works sought to identify two types – the orthodox/catholic type of universal church and the Protestant type.

¹⁵ I am currently working on fleshing out the idea of a *Gathering Church*.

¹⁶ W L Lumpkin, *Baptists Confessions of Faith*, (Valley Forge, 1969). For examples of statements of belief of European Baptist Unions see G Keith Parker *Baptists in Europe: History and Confessions of Faith*, (Nashville, Tennessee 1982).

There is a strong argument for saying this is much too narrow and does not fit reality. The late Lesslie Newbigin, the famous missiologist, wrote a book early in his time as a missionary in India called *The Household of God*.¹⁷ Though ignorant of the work being quietly done by Mennonite scholars and others, he set out a third type – the pneumatological type of church which he described as ‘The Community of the Holy Spirit’. In the last thirty years this type has been analysed and worked on by, amongst others, James William McClendon Jr.¹⁸ He has developed the thinking of Newbigin with a typology he calls the ‘baptist with a small b type’. It is local, Spirit-filled, mission-oriented. It is a community of conviction, and its discipleship is always shaped by a practice of discernment. He and many others believe such churches need to be recognised outside of the classic Protestant definition which concentrate on the Reformed churches of the Magisterial Reformation – Reformed, Lutheran and, to a lesser extent, Anglican or Episcopalian.

I believe it is important, in Europe, that we wrestle with this typology of ‘baptist’ or ‘gathering church’ model and ask what implications it has for our missiological ecclesiology and ecumenical dialogue.

How do you join the church?

From Baptist ecclesiology comes baptismal practice. It was on this key point that Zwingli and his friends divided. They had been engaged in a radical review of the nature and purpose of the church by studying scripture and comparing text with text. In the Prophezei school, held in the Grössemunster in Zürich, they reflected on these issues. Zwingli had doubts about the necessity of infant baptism and was also ready, as the Reformation began to unfold in Zürich, to accept the notion of the suffering church. In a letter to Thomas Wittenbach dated 15 June 1523 he comments that ‘You can wash an unbeliever a thousand times in the water of baptism, but unless he believes it is in vain. It is faith that is required in this matter.’¹⁹

Later Zwingli defended infant baptism as he realised the Reformation in Zürich required the support of the cantonal and city authorities, and he identified his Reformed church with the inhabitants of the canton.²⁰ Ultimately, Zwingli, by the end of 1523, had come down in favour of a state church for which security and unity of direction were provided by a

¹⁷ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church* (New York, 1954).

¹⁸ James Wm. McClendon Jr. *Systematic Theology Volume 1 Ethics* (Nashville, 1986), Volume 2, *Doctrine* (Nashville, 1994).

¹⁹ Quoted in G R Potter *Huldrych Zwingli* (London, 1978).

²⁰ For more on Zwingli see particularly W P Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford, 1986). E J Furcha and H Wayne Pipkin (editors) *Prophet, Pastor, Protestant* (Allison Park, 1984); G R Potter *Zwingli* (Cambridge, 1976).

Christian (for him an evangelical) government, as in Zürich. Children were to be baptised into the national/cantonal church. Baptists, rather, say the basis of membership in the church is the conscious and deliberate acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord by each individual.

We know that such a step may be swift and emotional or slow developing and undramatic, and is often experienced within the life of a convictional gathering community, but it is always personal – personal but not individualistic, for we experience this gathering reality. As I have already remarked in historical perspective, Baptist theology knows nothing of the baptism of an individual without the active involvement of a gathering convictional community and without the baptised believer seeking to identify and, indeed, be gathered into such a community.

Sadly, there are Baptist churches which do not understand their own ecclesiology and which engage in the un-Baptist activity of baptising people without seeking to know with whom they intend to be gathered. This, in some parts of our Baptist family, is a heresy.

George Beasley-Murray, distinguished New Testament scholar and one-time professor at IBTS, sets out the biblical understanding in the classic book *Baptism in the New Testament*.²¹ An exploration of current issues around believers' baptism and baptism in ecumenical dialogue might be an appropriate topic for a future issue of this journal.²² For now I simply make this strong point about it being the entry into the gathering, convictional church, a church where we have a responsibility to help each other mature as Christian disciples.

It leaves questions, though, which need further reflection and discourse:

- Is there an age below which human beings cannot reasonably make an adequate response to the call of God and be baptised and join the church? (Note differences in Baptist communities in different parts of the world - from six-year-olds to the very elderly)
- Is baptism a non-repeatable event as the creeds seem to assert and most Baptist theology seems to say? If so, how do we regard Trinitarian baptism of a believer in another Christian tradition by affusion (like the Mennonites)? Is the amount of water fundamental? What about Baptists who baptise all who join their

²¹ George R Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London 1962).

²² See also the later thoughts of G R Beasley-Murray in 'The Problem of Infant Baptism: an Exercise in Possibilities', *Festschrift to Günter Wagner* (Bern 1994); and the work which has gone on within the World Council of Churches and the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* report and responses. Geneva, 1982 and onwards.

church even those already baptised by immersion?

- What do Baptists believe about children of Christian families, brought up and nurtured in the church, and God-fearers who have been part of our communities for a long time, but have never been baptised?

What does the church do?

1. *She gathers in worship* (note the feminine, reflecting that the Church is the Bride of Christ)

So, I have clarified what a church *is*; the process of gathering, and how people are added, but does our ecclesiology express what the church is for?

Perhaps here it is worth reflecting a little on the twin points of *being* and *doing*. There is a real sense that if God has called the Church into being and is engaged in the gathering, that, itself, is enough to justify the existence of the Church. Of course, most of the classic statements of belief remind us that our prime purpose is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Therefore, Baptists have reasonably supposed, in line with much other catholic and orthodox theology, that the gathering church is there to worship God. Here is the epicentre of the life of the gathering church. The worship itself has been the subject of much debate from the early church onwards. Today, it is a major area of debate within Baptist communities.²³ Again, I hope in subsequent issues of this journal that there will be exploration of worship, from the New Testament Church in Jerusalem through to some of the deep debates that go on amongst us today about the nature and form of worship, not least the issues of preaching and sharing in the meal.²⁴ Most Baptists (except the Seventh Day Baptists) have seen, as part of their ecclesiology, the gathering of the people of God for worship on the Lord's Day (the Day of Resurrection/Sunday), with such worship a corporate experience involving the reading of scripture, the proclamation of the Gospel and, appropriately, the sharing of the two biblical signs (sacraments or ordinances).²⁵

Some Unions/Conventions talk about sacraments and others about ordinances. Definition is important and in no instance do Baptists understand the word 'sacrament' as needing priestly intervention. Much more do we understand sacrament as an outward and visible sign of an

²³ The Baptist World Alliance has recently held Worship Conferences in Germany and Brazil, and one is planned for Spain in 2001.

²⁴ On the theology and practice of the meal amongst European Baptists see my 1999 Whitley lecture *A Shared Meal and a Common Table* (Oxford 1999) Czech edition *Sdílení. Večeře Páně A Společného Stolu* (Praha 1999).

²⁵ We face problems in debating issues of how the grace of God is experienced by us because of historical theological associations with words such as 'sacrament' and 'ordinance'. Further work needs to be done amongst us as to what we mean today as we look for theological ways of talking about sign and symbol.

inward and spiritual grace. Baptists believe there are two Gospel sacraments or ordinances instituted by Christ – Baptism, the way of entry into the church, and the Eucharist, the meal which proclaims *koinonia* in action.

2. *She discerns the mind of Christ*

This Gospel worship drives us into reflecting together on our common life in *koinonia*. Convictional congregational life starts from the theological premise that the believers gathering together in prayer and worship discern the mind of Christ. Unfortunately, many English Baptists in the 1800s developed notions of a pseudo-democratic type of church, organised and developed as if it was a club, or a mirror of local government politics with a parliamentary approach to debating issues, recording minutes, appointing committees etc.

Another wrong direction can be if too much power is taken by leaders. There is a calling out of some to specific ministries, and generally organising the community. All too often, though, the tail wags the dog and a leader becomes the driving force. I make this point strongly. Recently that great evangelical theologian Dr John Stott has commented –

Too many people in the church behave as though they believe not in the priesthood of all believers, but in the papacy of all pastors. There are too many gurus, there are too many autocrats who lay down the law in the local church in defiance of the teaching of Jesus. The great need amongst Christian leaders is less autocracy and more affection and gentleness.²⁶

The dilemma is clear – our high-minded theology of the convictional covenanted *koinonia* gathering together to discern the mind of Christ can fall prey to two extremes – the descent into a democratic form which excludes the Spirit in rules and regulations, procedures and boards, taking minutes and wasting hours; or the claiming of power by one or more leaders (and that can happen in churches or unions). Such communities have to be on their guard. The gathering community, searching for the mind of Christ in decision-making, is a high-minded and magnificent theological concept, but it needs teaching afresh to every generation, and the practical outworking always needs testing by the theological model.

3. *She seeks to identify with the mission of God*

Future issues of this journal will explore new dynamics of mission

²⁶ Dr John Stott addressing the 2000 Keswick Convention reported in *The Baptist Times*, 2 August 2000.

amongst European Baptists. Here let me assert that the convictional community of believers does not exist for itself. In my view, the very best worship services do not end with a blessing 'Sit down you faithful community, enjoy your rest'. Rather, with a word of dismissal – 'The feast is ended, the world is waiting. Go in peace to love and serve the world'. This missiological dimension is inextricably bound up with the gathering or believers' church.

However, despite baptist theology of mission, there has sometimes been a lack of missionary zeal. Possible reasons for this include –

- To early Baptists in England and to many Baptists under communism, social exclusion was a factor. The law prohibited active mission by the gathering communities.
- To some early Baptists, education and travel restrictions were factors. However, the church I first pastored claims to have been founded in 1661 and certainly had a settled pastorate and property by 1697. It was vigorous in church planting - something like fifteen new churches in the first sixty years of the life of one community. That was no mean achievement, as one of the regular preachers was imprisoned twice for preaching within five miles of a parish church (which was illegal).²⁷ The church was in a small community away from centres of population, and preaching stations were established within half a day's horse ride. The church, which founded the mother church of one of our largest cities, met for fifteen years in a wood under a rock face to avoid local difficulties.

Once open mission activity became possible in England, the USA and, with the work of Johann Oncken, in continental Europe, Baptist churches have been planted by missionaries and travellers all over the world, to such an extent that Baptists represent one of the largest world-wide Christian communions.²⁸

Independency versus interdependency

Baptists have historically and theologically rejected the extreme models of a hierarchical pyramid (eg. the Pope) or total independency. The local gathering community of conviction is the starting point, yet Baptists have not practised independency, but interdependency. Each church is held to be competent, under Christ, to rule its own life. Nevertheless, relating to

²⁷ Evan R Lewis, *History of the Baptists of Barnoldswick* (Cwmavon, 1893).

²⁸ Statistics are compiled each year by the Baptist World Alliance and currently indicate a community of 162,060 churches with 43 million members.

like-minded congregations, referring concerns to them, associating together to inspire one another, discussing matters of mutual interest, helping identify those who might be drawn out and trained for special functions of ministry and mission, have always been part of Baptist ecclesiology. We have recognised the dangers of isolation and schism, and the need to have others help us test what is truly the mind of Christ. From the New Testament (Acts 15 and the Council in Jerusalem), from the writings of Paul and the whole experience of the early church, it is understood that gathering churches – networking, relating, discussing and acting together – represent a clear norm for Christian communities.

At first early Baptist churches associated with others nearby. They would gather together periodically for worship and discussion, they would send messengers to each other, and refer to one another for advice. The 1677 Confession declares it in this way:

As each church and all the members of it are bound to pray continually for the good and prosperity of all the churches of Christ in all places; and upon occasions to further it.... so the churches... ought to hold communion amongst themselves for their peace, increase of love and mutual edification.²⁹

In 1792 the British Baptist Missionary Society was formed, which took associating a stage further by the idea of a mission society. These proliferate in many parts of the world and here in Europe we continue to share together in the work of BMS, the European Baptist Mission and the various international mission departments in the Nordic churches. This trans-national work has also developed with the formation of more specialised aid and development agencies such as Baptist World Aid and Hungarian Baptist Aid. In the early 1800s national Unions and Conventions developed. Most of these were formed in line with state boundaries (though not all – some are language groups such as the Swedish speaking Finnish Baptist Union and the Hungarian speaking Baptists in Romania). It is not clear, in the light of our ecclesiology and theology, why national boundaries should determine the shape of our Unions and Conventions, although there may well be pragmatic reasons to do with negotiations with governments over religious rights and socio-political issues.

Baptists disagree as to how much associations and unions are ecclesial in nature. Yet in most parts of Europe there is a recognition that there is an ecclesiological and theological reality to the 'more than local' emphasis of the church. In 1905 the Baptist World Alliance was formed to draw these

²⁹ C.f. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions*, pp. 235ff.

wider associations and unions into relationship, but the BWA has always resisted any idea that it is more than a meeting place for Baptists.³⁰

Servants and enablers

Baptist ecclesiology has always emphasised the proper ordering of the church. That is to say, the convictional gathering community reflects and then discerns those who might have specific tasks amongst them. Such people are often set aside for these tasks with prayer and the laying on of hands (the earliest Baptists always laid hands on pastors, common practice now in many European countries). They are set aside to be servants of the servants of God and not to be masters.³¹ Servant leadership as a theological model draws inspiration from many places in Scripture, including the servant songs of Isaiah and the ministry of Jesus himself. There are always pressures for more robust and assertive leadership and much is being written and debated on this theme.

Worthy of further exploration would be issues about servant leadership, both local and translocal. This might include work on these questions:

- Are there specific New Testament offices (Bishop, Elder, Deacon)?
- Is there such a thing as translocal ministry?
- Are all ministries open to all believers (the place of women)?
- Are those set aside, set aside for a period or can some be trained and set aside to an office for life?

Answers amongst Baptists vary, but most ecclesiological models would see a place for those called out to enable/shepherd/guide a church – pastor or minister. Many see others called out in a complementary role and the New Testament words ‘elder’ and ‘deacon’ are both used amongst Baptists in a variety of ways. Many see the rightness of associating churches calling out people to translocal ministry. The English General Baptist Messengers of the 1600s and 1700s have become the Executive Ministers, the Regional Ministers, the Bishops (in some countries) of the 20th century.

The basic fact is that for most Baptists it is the convictional gathering community which discerns those who will be called, whether from inside or outside, to these specialist functions. That same community gives them authority to act as servants and enablers. In many instances the associating churches act together in ordaining people to specific ministries or validating ministries amongst a wider group of churches; but being true to

³⁰ Baptist World Alliance *We Baptists*, (Franklin, Tennessee, 1999).

³¹ C.f. the comments by John Stott and also Brian Haymes *A Question of Identity* (Leeds, 1986).

Baptist ecclesiology, those same communities also have the right to test, admonish and, indeed, withdraw recognition.³²

The lifestyle of the gathering community

Within the gathering communities there has always been an expectation that the believers are being shaped as true pilgrims for the journey of faith. The response of faith leads to a change in lifestyle and the whole community has a responsibility to support, sustain and correct the members in Christian discipleship. At times this has led to the practice of discipline within the gathering church. Today it often leads to support structures, mentoring, soul-friends and reflection groups to help believers live out their calling in the world.

Issues of lifestyle affect us all. How are disciples best to witness to the hope that is in us in a sceptical world? That emphasis varies across Europe and appears to be partly formed by our reading of the Bible, tradition, and the culture in which we are set. So Baptists in Europe have strong, but differing views, about pacifism, foods we should eat, attitudes to trading, personal activities such as smoking, drinking, dancing, sports, dress, hairstyles, work ethics, politics, general consumerism and music. How we address these issues and how we help one another to develop Christ-likeness, which attracts those outside and demonstrates that Baptists are communities of conviction, continues to offer real challenges. Perhaps what is needed most of all at present is a pan-European debate where we listen to reasoned arguments and debate together, and do not simply criticise one another for working out our discipline and our lifestyle differently?³³

Church and State

The great majority of Baptists believe in the clear separation of Church and State. That is to say, Baptists declare Christ to be the Head of the Church and do not accept any control from the State. Though this principle is almost universally declared by Baptists, there are differences of interpretation. Does that lead to a shunning of all relations with the State by those in the convictional community?

Here are some questions from recent debates amongst Baptists in the world –

- Do Baptists take up opportunities to serve in state-funded posts such as military chaplains?

³² C.f. 'The Meaning and Practice of Ordination Amongst Baptists', BUGB 1953 in *Baptist Documents*.

³³ For example see *Five Core Values for a Gospel People* (Didcot, 1999), and *Making Moral Choices in our Relationships* (Didcot, 2000).

- Do Baptists participate in state-run schools by going to take prayers or talk about the Gospel?
- Do Baptists take money from the state to assist in church and mission work, either paying for our pastors, grants for building repairs, or money towards mission programmes?
- Do Baptists take advantage of tax exemption or special tax regulations for charities?

Baptists struggle with these issues in many contexts throughout Europe. The principle is easily enunciated, but the practical outworkings in our modern complex societies are more difficult.

Baptists and the other Christian communions

Baptist ecclesiology leads to interdependency. I have already expressed the view that this has historically been understood as 'with like-minded churches'; but how like-minded do we need to be? An American Baptist once said to me that the understanding of ecumenism amongst Baptists in North America was talking to other Baptists in a different Convention! That may be an unfair parody. Some Baptists have been prepared to engage in appropriate relations with other Christian churches (generally Protestant). In the second half of the last century a considerable number of local churches have worked co-operatively with others. On a national and international scale, some Baptists have co-operated and dialogued with others in national councils of churches, the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches. Many more have identified with pan-evangelical groupings such as the Evangelical Alliance, the Lausanne Movement, and the World Evangelical Fellowship.

In some unions, serious theological dialogue has taken place with other Christian traditions. Internationally the Baptist World Alliance has engaged in conversations with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Mennonite World Council, the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics.³⁴ Talks about talks have been held with the Orthodox and the Anglicans, and there have been semi-official dialogues amongst churches of the believers' church tradition.

Again, this is a matter for reflection in our own ecclesiology - where are the boundaries of our own associating? What are our sticking points? Brian Haymes, a former trustee of IBTS and now minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, London, says-

³⁴ Copies of the reports of these various dialogues are in the IBTS Library or available from the Baptist World Alliance.

No congregation lives to itself, in Christ. No congregation does its own thing, in Christ. It is this incorporation, this 'being the body of Christ', that is the theological ground of our associating together and our shared life with other churches. I understand that this interdependency was more obviously a feature of our early Baptist life than it is today. The 19th Century saw the emergence of the 'independent' Baptist church, a downgrading of the more traditional and theologically significant perception of the nature of the Church and a common life in the body of Christ.³⁵

I join Brian Haymes in lamenting this trend. It is not good Baptist ecclesiology.

Conclusion

This has attempted to be a panoramic overview of the heart of our ecclesiology. Inevitably the treatment of some deep themes has been with a sweeping brush stroke. Hopefully in future editions of this journal issues of our ecclesiology in Europe today can be debated and examined together.

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³⁵ Brian Haymes, *A Question of Identity*.

HUNGARIAN BAPTIST BEGINNINGS: THE STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY

The history of the Hungarian Baptists before the emergence of the communist regime can be divided into three periods. The initial period was the period of the first pioneers, which was followed by the period of searching for ecclesiastical identity, and the third period can be described as one of consolidation in the shadow of a totalitarian era. It has to be noted that until the end of the First World War Transilvania was a part of Hungary, therefore the history of the Hungarian Baptists in Transilvania cannot be separated from the history of the Baptists in Hungary. This article looks at Hungarian Baptists in both Hungary and Transilvania. It looks at the first two periods and examines especially the way in which the growth of Baptist life was indebted to both German and Hungarian influences and the ways in which this brought about conflict as Hungarian Baptist identity was shaped.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, a large number of Germans lived in Hungary. Beginning from the twelfth century, in different waves, German colonies were settled in Budapest, Felvidék and Transilvania. The 400 years of Habsburg dominion helped to produce a very strong German influence in Hungary. There were emperors such as Joseph II, who consciously took measures to 'germanise' the whole population of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Because of these reasons the German population, even those without extreme nationalistic tendencies, thought that they belonged to a superior class in Hungary.¹ On the other hand it can be affirmed that the nineteenth century in Hungary was the century of forming and developing a national Hungarian consciousness. From the time of the Reformation, writers, poets and politicians wanted to eliminate Latin and German from schools, and worked hard to help Hungarian to become the main national language in Hungary. One of the purposes of the national revolution in 1848, the War for Independence, as well as the treaty of 1867, was the establishing of a National Hungarian State.

Given these circumstances, by the end of the nineteenth century in Hungary, beyond a healthy expression of a national consciousness, sometimes extreme nationalist speeches and patriotic manifestations and attitudes were heard and seen all over the country. The Hungarian Baptist communities that had come into being could not free themselves from such tendencies, from the endeavour of Hungarians to obtain national and cultural independence. They thought that it was something quite natural for someone to pray and worship in his own language. There also were many

¹ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben* (Budapest: Baptista Kiadó, 1996), p. 82.

Hungarian Baptists who could not understand the teaching and preaching of German speakers who planted the first Baptist churches. In these circumstances it is understandable why the Hungarian Baptists wanted independent Hungarian Baptist churches, and organisations. These are the tensions we will explore.

A pioneer of Hungarian Baptist Mission

The beginnings of the Hungarian Baptist movement can be dated to 20 May 1846. That was the day when Janos Rottmayer, who had been baptised in Hamburg, returned to his home city of Budapest. After the great fire in Hamburg of 1842, Rottmayer, along with several young craftsmen, went to Hamburg to help to rebuild the city, hoping to find useful work and to earn money. A number of these young men who found themselves in Hamburg began to attend the Baptist church and were converted.² Johann Oncken, the pastor of the Hamburg church and in many ways the father of European Baptists, was determined to build a Baptist mission network which would incorporate all the nations of Europe. It was Oncken who, after two years of training the young craftsmen from Hamburg who had been converted and baptised in Hamburg, sent them back to witness in their home land.³

Once Rottmayer started his mission in Budapest, serious problems and hindrances appeared. The defeat of the national Hungarian revolution in 1848 made almost impossible any kind of work for Christian missionaries. Anything that was not Roman Catholic was suspected by the authorities. Some of the foreign missionaries were expelled.⁴ In these circumstances it is understandable that Rottmayer did not have a great impact during his stay in Budapest. However, his mission and endeavours were not futile. As a result of his ministry, there was a baptism in Budapest officiated by Johann Oncken in 1848 (the exact day, place and the number of the candidates unfortunately are unknown). The difficulty of Christian ministry in that period is evidenced by the fact that the second baptismal service in Budapest was organised seventeen years later, when six people were baptised by Oncken's close colleague, G.W. Lehmann, in the river Danube. By that stage there were changes in the realm of politics and a further baptismal service followed, officiated by August Liebig, a teacher of the school of theology and mission in Hamburg.

The real impact of Rottmayer's ministry among Hungarians was felt after he moved to Cluj in Transilvania as the representative there of the

² *Krisztusért Járván Követségben*, p. 19.

³ H.Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Uitgeverij, Boekencentrum, B.V. Zoetermeer, originally Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1987), p. 488.

⁴ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben*, p. 22.

British and Foreign Bible Society. This was not a post he had been seeking, although it was in line with the Bible distribution work which Oncken had undertaken in Hamburg. In 1865, however, Rottmayer's carpentry workshop failed, and this precipitated a move. He had to sell everything and was considering emigrating to America in order to survive. Meanwhile the Bible Society was looking for a new colporteur, and through a friend, Antal Novak, who introduced him to the Bible Society, he was employed as a colporteur, and was soon directed to Cluj. While packing his wife suddenly died. Privation, grief and misery surrounded the Rottmayer family. Yet Rottmayer was prepared to accept the challenge to go to Cluj even if he had to sell everything he owned. He made the journey by cart from Oradea to Cluj, a distance of more than a hundred miles.⁵

From his arrival in Cluj to his retirement, Rottmayer was a determined colporteur, who devoted all his time and energy to spreading the Bible among the people of Transilvania. Leaving his children in the care of a baby sitter, he went to villages and towns knocking at the doors of people and offering the Holy Scriptures at an affordable price. He was a German speaker but learned to speak Romanian in order to be able to share the good news among Romanians as well. As a colporteur he was very successful. In one of his reports to Hamburg, he writes that during a single year in Cluj he was able to sell more than 10,000 Bibles.⁶ After a short time Rottmayer realised that the need was much more than he alone could supply. At his proposal six more people were employed by the Bible Society in the area of Cluj, in order to deliver Bibles in different parts of Transilvania.

Rottmayer was not only an outstanding colporteur. Another great merit of his ministry was the establishing of the first Sunday schools for children. This too, was something that had been effective in Hamburg. In 1860 Rottmayer organised the first Sunday school in Budapest, and after his arrival in Cluj he did the same. This was something relevant to his context. Rottmayer also edited a hymn book, which had thirty-nine songs for children. In 1872, when the General Secretary of the Baptist Bible School Alliance visited Hungary in order to organise Sunday schools for children, he was very surprised that in Cluj Rottmayer had started this kind of ministry eight years earlier. Rottmayer's strategy in mission generally was to gather the children together first, read the Bible with them, teach them new songs, and then invite the parents to come to see what their children were able to do. Some of the parents later invited Rottmayer to their homes, and after receiving Christ they formed themselves into the first Baptist church in Cluj.⁷

⁵ Kiss László, *Az Erdélyi Magyar Baptisták Történelme* (manuscript), pp. 17-18.

⁶ Ioan Bunaciu, *Istoria Raspandirii Credintei Baptiste in Romania*, (Bucuresti: Editura Universitati, 1995), p. 86.

⁷ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben*, pp. 28,29.

An organising ministry

The Baptist movement in an organised form in Transilvania started in Salonta, where Antal Novak, one of Rottmayer's friends, visited a group of people who gathered regularly for prayer and Bible Study. Novak was born in 1828 in Stajeroszág. He met Rottmayer in Budapest where they helped each other in their small businesses. Slowly they became close friends. Rottmayer soon shared his faith in Christ, and the result was the conversion of Novak and his wife. Both become devoted colporteurs employed by the Bible Society from May 1865. They started this ministry before becoming Baptists, and continued after their baptism, which took place in Vienna in 1870. Novak's strategy in mission was an organised one: he made initial visits and contacts and then returned to the places he had visited. When he first arrived in Salonta, which was a small town in the northern part of Transilvania, he met a group of people who were very interested in discussing biblical issues. Because the Reformed church was not meeting their spiritual needs, these people gathered in houses. Such gatherings were organised in many Hungarian Reformed parishes by the end of the nineteenth century. They formed the base for Baptist mission in Transilvania.⁸ It seems that Novak was the one who realised that these groups of people, coming from a Protestant background, were ready to receive Baptist beliefs. Novak's work carried on until he died in 1877 in Heltau, probably of an infectious disease.⁹

After a few people in Salonta had expressed their desire to fulfil God's command and follow the example of Jesus in receiving baptism, Novak was ready to organise and arrange a baptismal service. During a conference convened by the Bible Society in 1875 he met Henrik Meyer (1842-1919), an ordained Baptist minister from Germany, and invited him to come to Salonta where there were eight people willing to receive baptism according to the teaching of the New Testament. On 20 August 1875 Meyer was able to come and officiate at a baptism at Békés Gyula where these people were baptised.¹⁰ That was a very important moment in the history of the Hungarian Baptist mission. This was the first group of Hungarian people who, after receiving baptism, formed a fully constituted Hungarian Baptist Church - in Transilvania – and at that stage their model of local church organisation was the one that had come to them from Hamburg through Rottmayer and Novak.

⁸ Szigeti Jenő, *A Magyarországi Szabadegyházi Közösségek Keletkezése és a Protestáns Egyházak* (Theológiai Szemle, 1976), pp. 71-3.

⁹ *Krisztusért Járván Követésben*, p. 35.

¹⁰ Ioan Bunaciu, *Istoria Raspandirii Credintei Baptiste in Romania*, pp. 88-9.

A charismatic leader

The German influence on Hungarian Baptist identity was to continue. With the arrival in Budapest, from Germany, of the charismatic figure of Henrik Meyer, in 1873, a new chapter opened in the history of the Hungarian Baptists. In many villages and cities small but growing Baptist churches were soon formed and established. If up to 1873 there were only a few people baptised as believers, by the end of the century there were more than 4,000 Baptist members in almost 220 Baptist churches in Hungary. Out of these Baptist members, more than a half were baptised in and belonged to the Baptist churches in Transilvania.¹¹ The background and personality of Meyer, who became the most dynamic leader of Hungarian Baptists, needs to be considered in understanding the implications of this growth.

Meyer was a farmer and craftsman by background. The radical change in Meyer's life started in 1861 when his parents began on a regular basis to visit the Baptist church in Hamburg. He was invited too, but as he writes in his autobiography, he thought the Bible was only for old or mentally ill people. However, after a month of spiritual struggle and internal warfare, God convinced Meyer that he was a lost sinner, needing God's grace and mercy for salvation. Soon Meyer joined the rest of the family in attending the church and on 7 March 1862, along with his parents and two sisters, he was baptised in the river Lahn and became a member of the Baptist church in Hamburg.¹²

After two years of learning from Johann Oncken, Meyer was appointed as the leader of the youth organisation in the Hamburg church. He became involved in all kinds of church activities, especially church planting ministries. Because of his great interest in mission, in 1869 he was willing to go to Russia to work among the Stundists.¹³ There were two significant events in the life of Meyer during his stay in Russia. In January 1870, he was ordained by brother Brondra, so that from then on he could officiate at baptisms, preside at the Lord's Supper and fulfil all the responsibilities of a pastor. It was also in Russia that he met and married Matilda Michelson, a German-speaking Mennonite girl. Matilda proved to be a very good wife and mission worker and they worked together for more than twenty-eight years.

In spite of his relatively young age, Meyer proved to be a very fine leader and worked as one who had wisdom, skill and rich experiences.

¹¹ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben*, p. 47.

¹² Meyer Henrik *Önéletrajza*, Ford. *Fejér Gyula* (Budapest: Kézirat, 1960). *A Magyarországi Baptista Egyház Levéltára*.

¹³ People who gathered weekly for Bible Studies which were normally an hour in length.

Because of his bold speech, Bible knowledge and sense of humour, he was always loved and respected. In 1872, Meyer joined the British and Foreign Bible Society. He first was directed to go to Zagreb in Croatia. The desire to spread the Gospel and his love for the Hungarian people then brought him to Hungary and helped him to offer his life for Hungarian mission. He was a man who was not without fault or weaknesses, as we will see, but he became the right leader for the Hungarian Baptist movement in those days. He moved to Budapest on 6 March 1873, at the age of thirty-one.

After the arrival of Meyer in Budapest the Baptist movement, as we have seen, suddenly started to grow and develop. He reorganised the Sunday school for children and preached the Gospel to adults. Soon, in 1874, he officiated at a baptism in Budapest where four people were baptised. Meyer understood correctly that the mission field was not only Budapest, but was the whole country, a region where Germans and Hungarians were living. Therefore he started to teach and preach outside of Budapest in the neighbouring towns and villages and in other more distant localities.¹⁴ Thus, Transilvania became a place where Meyer worked diligently, visiting many places and working with local missionaries.¹⁵ In June 1875, when the eight people were baptised at Salonta, it was Meyer who was authorised to officiate. Among the candidates was Mihály Kornya, who was going to be one of his best friends and colleagues and became the most outstanding Hungarian missionary in the whole history of the Hungarian Baptist movement.

The ministry of the Hungarian peasant prophets

It is crucial for Hungarian Baptist identity to understand that until the baptism of the candidates from Salonta, the ministry of Meyer was directed only to German-speaking people. Once Mihály Kornya and his group were baptised the first Hungarian Baptist church was formed, and the Hungarian-speaking Baptist movement was started. The church in Salonta soon became the centre of Baptist mission. From there the Word of God was spread through the whole territory of Hungary and Transilvania, not only among Hungarian-speaking people but among Romanians as well. In a few years the church in Salonta became a large church where the spirit of renewal and a strong mission orientation was present for many decades. The secret of this growth was the obedience of the members to the Word of

¹⁴ Meyer himself describes one of the baptisms at which he officiated in this town. The preliminary enquiries lasted until 2am, when it was decided that there were 13 people who could be accepted for baptism. There was a woman who was very ill. At 3 am. they went to the place where the service was to be held, the ill woman transported by a cart. There was ice since the weather was cold, and they had to cut a hole in the ice to baptise the candidates. Meyer baptised all of them, and notes that the ill woman did not need the cart to go back to her house, because she was healed and able to walk on her own.

¹⁵ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben.* p. 128.

God and the presence of quite a few leaders who became known as the 'peasant prophets'. The most notable of these were Mihály Kornya, Mihály Tóth, János Lajos and Sándor Vass. Through them the fire of spiritual renewal was spread in many towns and villages, and new mission centres were formed all over the country.

Among the peasant prophets who emerged from the church in Salonta, Kornya was undoubtedly the most outstanding in the history of the Hungarian Baptist movement. Up to the present time, indeed, he has been the most effective Baptist pastor and evangelist the Hungarian Baptist movement has ever had. He was born in 1844 in Salonta to a poor family. His father was a farmer and at a young age Mihály Kornya became the coachman of György Rozván, a famous and rich lawyer living in the region.¹⁶ Kornya was only twenty-two when he married Mária Pataki Zsigó. They had seven children, but five of them died before his death. His wife also died in 1890 and he married a widow from Derecske who had been baptised by him eight years earlier.

Although Kornya was never a rich man, he rented land for crops, reared pigs, cows and horses, and soon after his marriage was able to buy a house which later served as a regular meeting place for the church. After his conversion he was diligent in reading and studying the Word of God, which helped him a great deal when he started preaching the gospel. Many times when he went out to work the land, he was doing nothing else other than reading the Bible. Meyer soon realised the spiritual gifts with which Kornya was endowed, so he organised an ordination service. On 11 November 1877 in Salonta, Mihály Kornya and Mihály Tóth were ordained as deacons. Fritz Oncken and János Rottmayer attended this ceremony. Kornya immediately started his mission and soon Meyer was invited to come and officiate at baptismal services in Biharugra, Berettyóújfalu, Darvas and Komádi. Three years later, in 1881, Meyer visited the church in Salonta, and Kornya and Tóth were ordained as elders. They then started to officiate at all the church services.

Kornya was an outstanding speaker. Sometimes he was harsh and categorical in his speech, on the other hand he could express love and kindness. As a talented preacher he was able to make his listeners laugh or cry. As an original pastor he was very witty, full of good ideas, and courageous in difficult and even apparently impossible circumstances.¹⁷ His presence and role as a Hungarian in the history of the Hungarian Baptists was very important. There are three periods in Kornya's ministry.

¹⁶ Kriner A Bertalan, *Kornya Mihály baptista úttörő parasztapostol krónikája* (Budapest: Egyetemi Nyomda 1990), pp. 29-38.

¹⁷ Csopják Attila, *Képek a Magyarországi Baptista Misszió Történetéből* (Budapest: Baptista Könyvkereskedés, 1928), pp. 14-15.

The first one was from 1881 to 1893. During this period, Kornya was travelling from Salonta to different places preaching the Gospel. There were more than 100 localities where in this period Kornya planted new churches, most of them in County Bihar and Hajdu. The second period started in 1893 when he moved to Derecske then to Oradea. That was the hardest period in his life because there were tensions and problems for Baptists. The question of state recognition divided the churches, and that was a very painful issue for Kornya. The third period started in 1900, the year he moved to Dioszig. From here Kornya started a new mission and planted many churches in the area of Bihar and Szilágyság. Until 1894 he was the only baptising leader in Eastern Hungary and Transilvania. Later he helped others to become ordained. As Bertalan Kriner, in his biography of Kornya, notes, during his ministry Kornya baptised more than 11,000 people.¹⁸

Mihály Tóth was another peasant prophet from the church in Salonta. He was the one who invited Kornya to the Bible reading group to meet Novak, but he was not ready to be baptised with the first group in Békés. The next year, in May 1876, he was baptised with his wife, and became the best friend and fellow worker of Kornya. He was a rich farmer with a good reputation, but after his conversion Tóth was ready to leave everything for the sake of God's Kingdom. Tóth was an excellent preacher and an outstanding teacher. He was not as strong an initiator as Kornya, therefore he continued the Baptist mission where Kornya had already started it. Organising the churches, teaching and helping the new converts to grow, and giving pastoral care were some of his main objectives.¹⁹

Tóth was also fully involved in erecting the first Hungarian Baptist church building in Salonta. Not only with his own hands, but with his money he contributed generously in building the church, which is even in our time one of the most beautiful churches among the Baptist churches in Transilvania. In 1877 he was ordained as a deacon, and in 1881 as an elder with Kornya. He started to officiate at baptismal ceremonies in his circuit. Between 1893 and 1905 Tóth officiated at 179 services of baptism and through his preaching and personal ministry brought 5,000-6,000 people to the point of conversion. He stood firm and served boldly. In the ten years from 1880-1890 he was imprisoned ten times.²⁰ Here was a fully Hungarian ministry.

¹⁸ Kriner A. Bertalan, *Kornya Mihály Krónikája*, p. 195.

¹⁹ Ioan Bunaciu, *Istoria Raspandirii Credintei Baptiste in Romania*, p. 90.

²⁰ Once he had to walk four days in chains in many villages, even through his home town.

Searching for ecclesiastical identity

Up to 1893 there was effectively a single Baptist community in Hungary, led by Henrik Meyer. The year 1894 was a turning point in the story of the Hungarian Baptist mission. As we will see in more detail below, two young Hungarian Baptists, András Udvarnoki and Lajos Balogh, returned from Hamburg in that year after finishing their theological training. They were at once accepted as leaders of the Hungarian-speaking churches, who had been striving for more independence from the German-speaking churches and for greater local church autonomy. The tension between German-speaking and Hungarian-speaking churches was connected not only with these issues but also with the question of recognition by the government. The Hungarian-speaking group was prepared to seek state recognition. These disagreements led to a division within the Baptist denomination in Hungary for more than twenty years. Unity did not return until 1920.

There were important underlying factors that contributed to the tensions among Hungarian Baptists, essentially over questions of Baptist identity. After the ordination of Kornya and Tóth, the Hungarian Baptist community started to grow significantly in the south part of Hungary and the north of Transilvania. All over the country new churches were planted and church buildings were built. Ten years after Kornya's ordination the number of church members reached 900 in 75 churches.²¹ It was the decade of pioneering and church planting. The positive effect of the Baptist mission in Hungary and Transilvania however was much bigger than can be measured in terms of the establishment of Baptist churches. Many people came to know Christ and to start to live a godly life even though they remained in the church they belonged to before. For this reason Imre Révész, a Reformed bishop and church historian, said that the Baptist mission was the stimulating incentive in the body of the Protestant church and served its spiritual renewal.²² There was, therefore, a genuinely Hungarian movement which would inevitably seek its own identity.

Henrik Meyer, however, found this process difficult. The first Baptist church in Budapest was a German-speaking church. Later there were Hungarian-speaking converts as well. At the beginning Meyer agreed that the Word of God could be preached in Hungarian too, but later, when the numbers of Hungarian converts increased, he stopped this possibility. When the new church was built in Wesselényi Street, under the corner stone he put a paper which said that the only language that could be used in

²¹ Szebeni Olivér, *Magyar Baptista Misszió Történelem* (Budapest: A Baptista Teológia Jegyzete, 1990), p. 20.

²² *Krisztusért Járván követségben*, p. 69.

this church is German. When Attila Csopják, a talented writer and a civil servant was converted, he was allowed to preach in Hungarian only if Meyer issued a letter first. Although Meyer expressed several times that he felt at home in Hungary, and that he was a Hungarian, his heart, however, remained German. It is not really understandable that a man like him, with strong intellectual capacities, during his forty-six years of stay in Hungary could not learn to speak Hungarian. That made it difficult for him to communicate and to preach in many Hungarian churches.

As well as the limitation caused by the use of the German language, there were also administrative limitations to what Meyer could achieve. Meyer considered himself as the pastor of the whole Baptist community in Hungary. He was involved not only in the spiritual life of the churches, but he directed and solved also all the administrative problems of the Baptist churches. Once the number of the churches increased, it became almost impossible for a single man to be able to meet all the spiritual and material needs the churches faced. Yet it is interesting to see his opinion about this issue. In a circular written by Meyer in 1894 he said: '...my position in the Baptist union is a position that no one in this country could or ever would fulfil. Out of this position that God granted me, there are great and serious responsibilities and privileges as well ... From the beginning I was and I still am the leader and teacher of all churches. That is why I endeavoured all my life to serve everybody with words and deeds.'²³ Thus in Meyer's eyes Baptist identity was consistent with a position in which one person had overall responsibility for the churches.

Native Hungarian theologians

The dominance of the German language and the dominance of one individual could not continue. It was seminary-educated Hungarians who brought about crucial changes. The growing and multiplying Hungarian Baptist churches urged that young Hungarian people should receive theological training and take on leadership. At first, Meyer backed the idea and with the help of other leaders appointed two young Hungarian men, Udvarnoki and Balogh, and sent them to the Baptist Seminary in Hamburg. The two students started their theological training on 30 August 1889. After learning German they became very good students, loved by all their teachers²⁴. During their study in Hamburg they understood the biblical teaching about church affairs and local church autonomy. In their opinion a Baptist Union is formed by those churches who freely choose and decide to come together. But all the churches in both spiritual and physical matters

²³ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben*, p. 84.

²⁴ Csopják Attila, *Képek a Magyarországi Baptista Misszió Történetéből*, p. 27.

remain independent. Obviously their view was not accepted by Meyer, who was the only pastor for all the churches.

In these circumstances conflict was inevitable. The forming of a separate Hungarian Baptist Union was what came out of the process of dispute. When Udvarnoki and Balogh arrived home from Hamburg, Meyer, according to the decision of the mission conference held in 1893 in Oradea, wanted to send Udvarnoki to support Tóth's ministry in Salonta, while Balogh was supposed to work alongside Kornya in the circuit of Oradea. The young ministers did not accept this proposal and some of the Hungarian Baptist churches strongly backed their new, younger theologians. Subsequently the church in Tahitótfa invited Udvarnoki to be the pastor of their church. After a short period of time the church in Hajduböszörmény invited Balogh with the same purpose, while Samuel Seres, who was designated initially to help Meyer in Budapest and the surrounding area, was invited to Szada to minister in the churches located between the rivers Danube and Tisza.²⁵

The new developments regarding the question of independence of the Hungarian Baptist churches affected the life of Baptist churches in Transylvania too. In 1894 there was a new mission conference at Berettyóújfalu where Henrik Meyer was present. The purpose of this conference was to divide the big circuit that was under the leadership of Kornya, between Kornya and Balogh. Kornya was supposed to minister from Oradea to Cluj in the east, and Érsemlyén in the west. But this new reorganisation was not accepted by all church leaders. The church in Oradea and some other churches wanted more independence and departed from Kornya who shared Meyer's opinion and supported him on this issue.²⁶ Indeed it is worth noting that Kornya and Tóth, although they were Hungarians, remained faithful to and stayed with their beloved and respected leader, Henrik Meyer.

Conclusion

Analysing this period we see that the work and sowing of faithful and diligent colporteurs was an essential element and was fruitful for Baptist beginnings in Hungary. The tens of thousands of Bibles they sold each year had a positive impact on the thinking and behaviour of Hungarian people. While the Reformation of the sixteenth century affected nations, regions or ethnic groups, Baptist ministry in the nineteenth century was of a different character, emphasising personal conversion. In the newly formed Baptist churches across Europe only those people who had encountered the living

²⁵ *Krisztusért Járván Követségben*, pp. 85-9.

²⁶ Kiss László, *Az Erdélyi Magyar Baptista története*, pp. 101-3.

God on their own account were accepted as members. Energetic Baptist mission was spread initially to Hungary through outreach from Hamburg, especially through Meyer, but many people who became involved were Hungarians belonging to the lower or middle class. Without higher qualifications or any theological education the peasant prophets of the Hungarian Baptist Mission became excellent church leaders, orators and counsellors who preached the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in all they said and did, contributed to the building up of God's Kingdom among Hungarian people.

There were painful events in the history of the Hungarian Baptist mission, but facts such as have been outlined cannot be avoided when this history is being told. These kinds of tensions are bound to be evident where a dynamic Christian community comes into being and starts to develop and grow. The tensions were caused sometimes by feelings about national identity, different opinions about Baptist principles and human weaknesses, but in their inmost being everyone wanted to please God, to help to build his Kingdom among Hungarians. History and time proved that those who wanted church autonomy were on the right track. The growing Hungarian Baptist movement did not need in the long run the guardianship and assistance of a German pastor. But for his part Henrik Meyer, with his feelings of fatherly love, could not understand why the churches wanted more autonomy and freedom. This freedom was essential, however, if a genuine Hungarian Baptist identity was to be established.

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August 2000

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New International Biblical Commentary

Look out for a new commentary in the NIBC Old Testament series, to be published later this year. It is on Joshua, Judges and Ruth. The purpose of this commentary series is to help readers move from the modern world to the ancient world of the Old Testament, so that the power and meaning of the biblical text can become clear to contemporary readers.

The approach of these commentaries is to undertake reflective interpretation of the text in the context of loyal biblical devotion. The authors bring to their work insights which enrich the life of the church and of the academy. This new commentary is of especial interest since one of the three authors is Dr Cheryl Brown, lecturer in Biblical Studies at IBTS, Prague. Cheryl Brown is known to many seminaries in Eastern Europe through her work with the Theological Assistance Group.

The commentary, published by Hendrickson Publishers and Paternoster Press, is based on the New International Version of the Bible. The authors, writing on Joshua, Judges and Ruth respectively, are J. Gordon Harris, Cheryl A. Brown and Michael S. Moore.

EAST AND WEST: A THEOLOGICAL CONVERSATION¹

There is an unusual institution in the USA. It is a college that offers Christian education in Russian, predominantly for the large Russian-speaking immigrant population from the Former Soviet Union and from the Central and Eastern European countries.² When I was studying in the USA I was asked to teach a course there on critical thinking. At first everything looked fairly routine. It is a basic American college course. However, in former communist countries this kind of course is 'foreign'. In the communist period the purpose of communication was not to clarify someone's point of view but instead to convey the demands of ideology. There was only one right way of thinking. Why should one bother to evaluate the wrong one?

In Eastern European evangelical thinking there is a somewhat similar kind of approach to be found. The connotation of the word 'critical' is often a negative one. For evangelicals to be critical in their thinking is sometimes associated with being destructive. Yet the Western concept of thinking critically is that in so doing serious attempts are being made to understand the other's point of view and to express oneself clearly. No Baptist would, I imagine, want to disagree with that.

I began my class on critical thinking with enthusiasm. It was enjoyable. I have rarely had such committed listeners. I used a biblical story, an apologetic piece of writing from C. S. Lewis and a sermon as the basis for my teaching and for discussion. A method of analysis, which Glen Stassen has developed, was my guide in the first part of my teaching. He has argued for his position in a series of essays.³ It is an integrative approach that helpfully analyses narrative and mental pictures and attempts to

¹ Much of this material has been read and corrected by Dr Glen H Stassen to whom I express my deep gratitude. My heart-felt appreciation goes to Dr Ian M Randall for the fine work of editing and shaping of the final version of this paper. I am in debt to Dr James Wm McClendon, Jr, Dr Nancey Murphy, Dr James Bradley, Dr Michael L Westmoreland-White and my students for their inspirations, constructive criticism and encouragement.

² It is an emerging preferred designation for the former communist countries of Europe and Central Asia based on results of an electronic survey: Mark Elliot, 'What to Call 'It'', *East-West Church and Ministry Report*, Vol. 8, No2 (Spring 2000), Part IV.

³ 'A Social Theory Model for Religious Social Ethics,' *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 5 (Spring, 1977); 'Editorial Notes,' *Ibid*, 1-7; 'Critical Variables in Christian Social Ethics,' in Paul D Simmons, ed., *Issues in Christian Ethics, a Festschrift* honoring Dr Henlee Barnette, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980, pp. 57-76); 'The Nature of Christian Moral Norms,' in ET 501: Christian Ethics, Reading Packet, Unpublished (Fuller Theological Seminary, Fall 1999), chapter 3 from the forthcoming book from InterVarsity Press by David Gushee and Glen Stassen, *Christian Ethics as Following Jesus*; 'A Four-Dimensional, Holistic Ethics of Character,' Faculty Address, Unpublished (Pasadena, Fuller Theological Seminary, June 1999).

understand holistic communication. It seeks to discern the driving forces behind the narrative. I thought that the students might have a hard time getting into the multi-dimensional character of this approach, but they grasped it easily and applied it to the texts we studied.

On the other hand, when I came later in the course to use the more traditional Western method of logical analysis of texts, as set out by Nancey Murphy for example,⁴ the tests taken by the students showed that in this case my students, although they had discussed well, had missed the point. It struck me then that the Eastern European culture is still predominantly a narrative one. How can you dissect a narrative or story by hard logic? It hit home to me that in the East we are thinking 'stories'. We want to enter into the stories. We think differently.

In what follows I will try to look more closely at these two different approaches to critical evaluation of one's modes of discourse, and especially theological discourse. I will name them 'integrative' and 'differential'. As a way of expression, as I see it, the integrative approach fits well a story-bound mind-set. I will call it 'Eastern' or 'Oriental'. The differential approach tries to seek ways to get to grips with the logical nature of discourse. Built upon modes of philosophical scientific reasoning, it seeks precision of definition and meaning in communication. It reveals the rationality embedded in the narrative. As a way of expression it is appealing to the rational logical mind-set. I will call it 'Western' or 'scholastic'.

I believe both of these approaches have their place in theological education. Indeed I consider them complementary. Each of them is both a critical tool (I use critical in a positive sense) and a mode of expression. Each of them appeals to different mind-sets. And in this they represent different mental languages with a different grammar. In the current situation among Baptists, among other evangelicals and within the wider Christian community in Europe, we should learn to appreciate not only our different traditions – East and West - but also the different mental languages we use to communicate with each other. Without recognition of and appreciation for our different ways of expression, there will always be a domination of one supposedly right way of theological thinking, writing, communicating and expressing. Consequently, all other ways are then regarded as defective, underdeveloped, secondary, and less than perfect. This is to our loss.

⁴ N Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

*THE INTEGRATIVE APPROACH***Thinking narrative, thinking Eastern**

What lies beneath our neatly and carefully chosen styles of reasoning in the West, and how might the East give us a different perspective? Let us illustrate this perspective first of all using the example of the field of ethics, an area of theology in which I have a particular interest. Something is missing in moral discourse, as Glen Stassen has argued.⁵ By abstracting a single mode of moral discourse - situationist, legalist, principlist are some common approaches - and by arguing the pros and the cons of the approach, the participants in the conversation lose sight of the moral purpose of the conversation altogether. Behind the trees, the forest is not seen. The remedy is an integral approach.

In a series of published and unpublished essays, Stassen, as I have indicated, has tried tirelessly and I believe persuasively to demonstrate that there are some more substantial elements of moral discourse than are found in this way of reasoning alone. In an article published about twenty years ago, he named his method 'Critical Variables in Christian Social Ethics'. We can apply what he argued to a wide range of theological work.

What this method of Stassen's encourages is the attempt to look at the text or speech as a whole, seeking to engage with its specific ways of expression, its convictions, passions, loyalties, interests and fears. The text is seen to have formative power. The challenge - which is in line with Eastern thinking - is to see the writer or the speaker as a whole human character (with his or her own integrity or particular interests) and not as a reasoning mind alone. In other words we are forced to seek for the wider narrative behind the reasoning. The narrative has a formative power too. The text and the author's narrative are internally connected. This integrated approach is very similar to the way that the narrative theologians and ethicists like James W. McClendon and others do their theologizing.⁶

There is in fact a logical flow underneath Stassen's structure. The underlying logic he uses is simple. Our way of reasoning is rooted in our convictions. They in turn have been formed by and are expressed in an exchange with the community of the 'like us' (say, fellow-Baptists)

⁵ Stassen, 'A Social Theory Model', pp. 9-38.

⁶ Michael Westmoreland-White comes to a similar conclusion. In his dissertation he writes, 'Stassen's concern with "ground-of-meaning" beliefs is similar to McClendon's focus on an individual or community's "convictions", beliefs so basic and deep that they are not easily changed and cannot be changed at all without significantly changing the individual or community in question,' 'Incarnational Discipleship: The Ethics of Clarence Jordan, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day,' Ph.D. Dissertation (Louisville, KY: Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, May 1995, chapter 1, note 97).

and on the other hand the 'not like us' (say, Christians of another tradition or non-believers). Our reasoning is essentially affected by how we perceive the two groups and how we find the fine balance of our interests and loyalties in relation to the two.

Let us examine the implications of this approach for theological education. First, it is important to compare theological discourse with ordinary discourse. In our everyday communication we do not normally reason. Instead we exchange opinions. We usually share them with close associates - partners or listeners in an ongoing dialogue. As a rule we do not give reasons for these opinions. They are implicitly 'out there' in the narrative of the form of life we share with others: family, church, wider community. This sense of the discourse taking place within the community is important for Eastern thinking. Theological education is best done in relationship with others.

There are times, in such relationships, when we want to persuade others of something we believe is right, wrong or important. Rightly or perhaps sometimes wrongly, we appeal to rules or principles that are familiar or can be accepted by the community we are addressing. Our agenda is to convince. If we run into objections to our agenda then strong feelings are not enough to persuade. What we need are more widely accepted concepts, which can act as a foundation. This is closer to the world of theological discourse. Rules, if they were agreed upon, would help. Yet it is impossible to force every human situation into a rule. Even worse, two or more rule claims can seem to conflict, and what then?⁷ An example in the field of ethics is the desire on the part of those who adhere to a pacifist position, on the grounds that this is what Christ taught and showed, to hold together the principles of abstaining from force and yet protecting the defenceless from oppression.

Formative convictions

Using Stassen's approach to such questions, there is a remedy - go deeper. A person should not be content with a set of rules but should find truly formative convictions. The way forward is an appeal to a higher court: to principles. Look to the overarching principles that the rules are based on and try to work the contradiction out on this level. Yet in theological discourse this procedure is not always straightforward. I have mentioned the question of force. There are the classical examples of the two principlist attitudes and responses toward war and conflict - those of pacifism and the just war theory.⁸

⁷ For a fine principlist discussion on conflicting human rights see David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1979).

⁸ On the nature of the debate see Glen H Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

Even with John Howard Yoder's twenty-nine different modifications of the pacifist position, those theologians who hold to this position still cannot reconcile their views with the equally theologically serious proponents of just war.⁹

Cardinal disagreements cut to the very heart of who we are as people and as Christian believers. They call for argumentation out of a person's formative convictions. And it is not easy. As I have argued, in everyday conversation we are often not engaged at any depth in such discourse. Yet when we come into the world of theology we are called to discuss opinions, rules and principles in which others and we believe. In the intellectual marketplace of ideas in the world, and also in the world of a seminary, we trade on such opinions. We have an euphemism for this: growing in understanding. In fact this growth can be very painful.

Opinions about commonplace matters such as, for example, taste in dress, are not formative in their nature. Cardinal beliefs, or formative convictions, on the other hand, as James W. McClendon aptly observes, 'are less readily expressed but more tenaciously held. It takes a long time to discover my own convictions, but when I do [if at all], I have discovered ... myself'.¹⁰ Convictions are about who we (individually or communally) are. This is not detached analysis. We are entering deeply into the story of the person.

One reason why it normally takes so long to discover one's convictions is that they are gradually formed by shared life - the narrative, tradition, customs and habits of the community to which we are committed. This communal tradition is central to Eastern life. There is an unconscious formation as well as a conscious embracing of values. But the point for our argument is that this is a holistic formation. The contextual nature of convictions formed by community makes them subtle and invisible, unless they are forcefully called out by a moral or theological crisis. Genuine membership in a community means just this: willingly shared convictions. Those who develop in such a way as to reject the beliefs of the community have the tension of being subversive in their own context or alternatively have to move to another community. The bonded community - such as a church - holds formative convictions. Conversely, a stranger does not hold these convictions and if the stranger disregards our convictions, the stranger is a threat. If he or she is ready to accept them then we are willing

⁹ See his *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism*, rev. and expanded ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992); Ralph B Potter, Jr, *War and Moral Discourse* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1969) and Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Love Your Enemies: Discipleship, Pacifism, and Just War Theory* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

¹⁰ J W McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics. Volume I* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), p. 22.

to consider him or her for admission to friendship and membership on a personal or communal level.

In the framework of a tradition and community our personal stories form our convictions and the stories are expressed in our convictions. For successful communication we ought to share a story, not only propositions.¹¹ This has serious implications for the way that we undertake theological study. It is in fact a more demanding approach than the mere sharing of opinions. It means that in a theological community we bring our convictions to the shared community experience and we also seek to understand the convictions of those to whom we listen or whose writings we read.

Expressing our convictions

I agree with James McClendon that convictions are the key for discovering others and myself. Understanding convictions is a serious business. I would further argue that the major value of Stassen's integrative approach to critical thinking is that as we use it we are enabled to do exactly this: to discover our convictions and to express them. The integrative method is about expressing convictions.

We may think of Stassen's different modes of discourse as different levels of expression. In fact, immediate judgements or opinions are precisely that: gutsy beliefs that one speaks out. The insiders of the convictional community, of course, easily comprehend them. They are,

¹¹ At a recent international conference in Prague (August 9-11, 2000) on 'Religious Liberty and the Ideology of the State,' sponsored by the Becket Fund and Becket Institute and co-sponsored by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, a series of very instructive examples of the power of a story to disinform public opinion was given. A repetitive telling of a plausible but not necessarily correct story may form public opinion and become a meta-narrative, within the framework of which any other story is measured and (dis)charged. All three forms of abuse of the state's power in relation to public religious beliefs are based on use of such formative (false) meta-narratives. It is equally true for state imposed atheism, state imposed religion and state imposed secularism (as Kevin J Hasson, the President of the Becket Institute, listed them). Francis Cardinal George of Chicago reminded the audience how a repetition of a plausible scientific account of the Enlightenment turned it into the epistemology of the twentieth century secular society and is used by the secular state as a weapon against any form of public religious epistemology. Dr Jean Bethke Elshtain observed a similar development in liberal democracy. According to her account, a retelling of the story of how early liberalism (e.g. of John Locke) saved religion from its bloodcurdling excesses in Europe by imposing 'toleration' turned to a grand-liberal meta-narrative in the twentieth century. It allowed for liberal monism (along John Rawls line of reasoning) virtually to cancel out any explicit reference to religious commitment and belief in the secular civic idiom of the public square. It forced religious experience into the most inner-private quarters of society's life. As Dr Mary Ann Glendon pointed out, not telling the full story of the origins of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (which she tells beautifully) has made it an easy target for ill intended attempts to subvert it as a slogan of the Western liberal Enlightenment.

however, unintelligible for the outsiders unless they are explained. Working out principles is a conscious attempt to understand one's convictions by contrast with those of others expressed in the intellectual marketplace. It is this task which theological study seeks to help us to do more effectively. This is part of the task of evangelism and mission, and biblical theology is always missiological.

Stassen is particularly interested in Christian ethical discourse. His set of convictions include beliefs about the being of God, human nature, the way in which Christians can grow more Christ-like and live out God's love and justice, their conversion as justification and their growth as sanctification, and the mission they have as God's people to the world. Let me try to expound the same set in terms of the more general enterprise of theological study, bearing in mind the tension between Eastern and Western thought.¹²

Our convictions are intimately related to our perception of ultimate reality, not simply to a logical set of theological propositions. The philosophers perhaps would call it world-view, but in the Eastern view it is also a story of God and his work in the world. Here we are drawn to the overarching biblical story. Then we move from the bigger story to the existential self.

At this point we may ask several questions. How does this belief matter to me? What is the nature of my life as a human being and how does conversion affect that life? What is human purpose, and what is human sin? How can I relate to the ultimate reality through my sense of calling? Can I grow in understanding and communication with God through my theological study? Is there a moral dimension to the study of the Bible? How do convictions about the justification of sinners and the sanctification of believers relate to study of the biblical texts? The integrated approach asks such questions. They are really about 'why' this kind of study should be done.

I have said that theology should be missiological. We should be able to express our convictions to the world. We are social creatures and are part of wider society: believers who are often called to live in a hostile context. Our grasp of who God is will demand of us some ordering of our relationships with fellow humans in the community. What is the nature of the mission of my community to the communities around us and to the world at large?

¹² The variables or the conviction set in Stassen's method are based on the social theory of Talcott Parsons and the research on key variables by Ralph Potter of Harvard and by Stassen himself.

Mission and integration in the world

If theological education has to be integrative and communal, as in Eastern thinking, it has to reflect on the relations with insiders and outsiders. How do we perceive the world around? This is what mission is about. The perception of the situation often begins in the Eastern European mind by defining the *threat*. Where does the danger to one's moral or social well being come from? Given the history of the Christian faith in communist countries, the idea of threat is a very real one. Nonetheless, there must be a move beyond the fear of threat to looking at society and seeing what are the prospects for a person's (or a community's) mission advance in the face of the challenges? This is the task of missiology. This is a call for openness.

The next step is to evaluate the *authority* in community or society at large: its location, legitimacy and limits. What are the powers in the community's structure? What should be our relationship to that authority in terms of our mission? Closely related to the question of authority are the questions of the desirability and speed of the presumably needed *social change* in the community. This is part of holistic mission thinking and is a huge issue for the current situation in Eastern Europe. How far and how soon should one go for change? How can we bring about the needed changes? We may see how issues in political philosophy can surface at these points and in fact they ought to be taken into consideration.

As Stassen points out,¹³ there is a strong correlation between the perception of the threat and our convictions about human nature, between perceptions of authority and our understanding of love and justice in society, and between integrity and our beliefs in justification and sanctification. Convictions matter. Perception of the threats, appeals to the authority and meditation on the possibilities for social change do not happen in a vacuum. They are based on information. Here is where theological study has a role: a seminary should be a place that encourages communication between people. Exchange of information is crucial for the proper functioning of a family, a church and a political community. Otherwise we can deal in half-truths, caricature and even lies. A key question to ask, then, is 'What is the *integrity* of a person, institution or community in dealing with information?'

The issue about *information integrity* rounds out the perception of our dealing with our own people or with outsiders. At the same time it opens a whole new issue of ultimate loyalties. Information is critical. Information is power. In the information age in which we live it is at the heart of any

¹³ 'Critical Variables,' p. 69.

person's performance and of the functioning of society as well. The question of information integrity grows in importance as never before in today's globalized world. Authentic mission must practise this principle. It must seek to tell the Christian story with integrity.

Yet here there is a problem. Modernity's illusion of detached objectivity has gone. Even for scientific inquiry, truth is a matter of current conventions in the guild.¹⁴ For the Christian believer, however, truth as revealed in Jesus Christ is the foundation. The truth is not to be distorted. A highly revered teacher of mine once gave me the following definition of gossip. He said that gossip is information with questionable integrity or partial truth.¹⁵ How do we walk the narrow path between the Scylla of truth-telling with integrity and the Charybdis of personal and community biases? Stassen's answer is by walking in repentance, loyalty and trust. We do not find truth simply by academic study. We find it in a person: Jesus Christ. We also find it in other people. The Bulgarians have a saying: 'Tell me who are your friends and I will tell you who you are.' These friends can be helpful if they engage with us in integrative discourse and enable us to grow. They can be destructive if all they do is affirm our prejudices. Reinhold Niebuhr rightly warns us not to trust a group's agenda alone. Groups are always biased to the group's own interests.¹⁶ This is why there is room for genuine debate in an evangelical theological context. It does not undermine mission.

At the conclusion of Stassen's reflections on method, his advice is to detect biases in ourselves and in others and to try to correct them. 'The name for this process of character-correction is repentance.'¹⁷ This is a central theme in Christian mission. To stress the life-changing nature of conversion is to espouse an ethic of virtue. But is this realistic? Will it work?

I grew up in a supposedly atheistic country officially (politically and ideologically) committed to humanist Marxist ideals. Even we were taught in our childhood the 'magic' word 'please', if you want to achieve something. 'Please' is okay for a child. Every child is vulnerable, self-

¹⁴ Analyzing the works of W V O Quine, Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Theo Meyering and Alasdair MacIntyre, Nancy Murphy comes to the conclusion that in epistemology or philosophy of science 'the most that can be claimed is that sometimes one can use one's own tradition-dependent standards of rationality to argue cogently in a public forum for one's own tradition. This leaves room for some competing theories, research programs, traditions ...' *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion, and Ethics*, (Boulder, CO: West-view Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Quoted by memory from a private conversation with academician Ljubomir Illiev, the former President of the Union of the Bulgarian Mathematicians and Former Vice President of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

¹⁶ *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*, A Touchstone Book Series (New York et al., NY: Simon & Schuster, 1995, originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1932, passim).

¹⁷ 'Critical Variables', p. 74. Cf. McClendon, *Ethics*, chap. 8.

protective and self-centered. 'Please' helps you to get easily from peers and adults. 'Please' is a self-centred politeness. Unfortunately, many of us never grew to adulthood. Adulthood is about caring, giving, sharing, benevolence, and charity. To be Christian is to be a fully developed human being. 'Please forgive me' is the adult's expression of being sorry for not doing any one of or all of the above. The childish one word 'please' must grow to a twelve-word apology, to repentance.

I did wrong! (I know I've made a mess, I've hurt you)
 I am sorry! (I do apologise. I did not mean that)
 I love you! (I care about you. I appreciate you)
 Please forgive me! (I will try to correct how I listen, understand, and act)

And even that is not enough for mature adulthood. Adulthood is also about facing misdeeds and confronting them.

You did wrong! (I am offended. I feel resentment)
 You should apologise! (I am sorry to tell you that, but I have to)
 You are loved! (I still love you. I care enough for you to tell you that)
 You are forgiven! (Let us talk, pray together and be reconciled)

Such caring repentance¹⁸ is a proper way out of fear, resentment and hostility. The way to build and sustain a genuine friendship, family, community, and whatever else, is by change, commitment and nurture. This is integrative mission. To understand a person's reasoning one must 'hear' a person's full story. Unveiling the Christian story and the stories of others in a way that reveals their inner character, not simply logical argument, is, I believe, the great value of the integrative method.

DIFFERENTIAL THINKING

Thinking logically: thinking Western

The integrative method answers the question, 'Why?' Why does a person take up a pen or take more direct action and go through the pain to express concerns or plea for a cause? First and foremost it is about motivations. We now look at the differential method. Because this is the well-known Western approach it will be dealt with more briefly. My purpose is comparison.

¹⁸ There is a series of books on caring forgiveness and reconciliation written by Dr David Augsburger at Fuller Theological Seminary. The title of one of them can be a metaphor for the issues of my concern, *Caring Enough To Forgive, Caring Enough Not To Forgive*.

Differential method, as I understand it, answers the question, 'What?' What is the particular logic that the person is arguing with? It is about argumentation. As a critical tool, differential method examines the foundations for my argumentation - the grounds - and the strength of the connections of these foundations with my affirmations - the claims. As a way of expression, it necessarily presupposes common ground with the reader. But what are the foundations of, let us say, Jesus' parables? The only ground I can come up with is the common convention of the time, which was to tell parables. This way of thinking, then, may not always get us very far. Nonetheless, it has great importance. Nancey Murphy's book on *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* is, in my view, the best reference book on the art of differential method in reasoning. Building upon Stephen Toulmin's analysis of the uses of arguments in philosophy of science,¹⁹ she goes far beyond that to show the relevance of this method to almost every subject on the theological curriculum as well.

As a scientist by training, I see some analogy between the differential approach in ethics and the deductive line of reasoning in science.²⁰ Any claim is constantly refined by careful examination of the appropriate grounds and by looking for the loopholes in the line of argumentation through rebuttals and qualifications. And yet the differential method is pretty much a child of the modern scientific age: it assumes that to understand you must atomize. This logical method is set out in Murphy's description of Toulmin's method.²¹ I will now examine this briefly.

Steps in logic

The first step is to define the main claim²² or claims of a person's treatise or speech. What is he or she arguing for? The claim is the major point on which the work as a whole hangs. A simple example would be a written work with one major claim. In the field of biblical studies such a claim was made when it was argued that a new perspective, beyond that of

¹⁹ Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, a reprint (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993, first published in 1958) and Stephan Toulmin, Richard Rieke and Allen Janik, *An Introduction to Reasoning* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1978).

²⁰ As Edward Hallett Carr points out, hypothetical reasoning was first introduced by French engineer and mathematician Henri Poincaré in his *Le Science et l'hypothèse*, published in Paris in 1902. It 'started a revolution in scientific thinking'. See his book *What is History?* (Vantage Books, A Division of Random House, 1961). It is widely believed that Carl Hempel in his *Philosophy of Natural Science* (Englewood, Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996) first articulated the concept of hypothetico-deductive reasoning in philosophy of science. On the concept of hypothetico-deductive reasoning, see Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion*, chap. 4.

²¹ Extracted from her book *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* and her lecture on Writing Workshop at Fuller Theological Seminary.

²² Here and further I will use the terms, describing the nature of the differential method, as they are introduced by Toulmin and defined by Murphy.

Luther, was needed on Paul or James. Next, we need to find the evidence for the person's claim. The claim arises from certain stated or assumed presuppositions. These are the grounds. It seems simple, but normally there is a chain, or better a tree-like branching complex structure of logical steps that hopefully bring us from the grounds to the author's claims. In a book with a clear goal, there is a definite attempt on the part of the author to move the reader from the known and accepted (the grounds) to the less known or new (the claims) arising from and supported by the known.

There are two observations to be made here. The first is that the degree of care taken by the author to define the grounds speaks much about the intended readers. As with the integrative method, the implicit grounds presuppose close communities with well-defined convictions about the subject of the work. The second observation is that there is no Jack-of-all-trades treatise. Each author addresses a specific audience. Part of the value of the differential method is in helping to evaluate an author's clarity in defining his or her audience.

Let me use an analogy. The line of argument can be compared with a bridge between the grounds and the claim or claims. As with regular bridges, there are some limits on the weight of the vehicles allowed to pass over the bridge without destroying it. How much weight should be allowed depends on the strength of the structure. Two issues are involved here. One possibility is to strengthen the structure for the purpose of increasing the weight. The other is to measure the strength of the existing structure and keep the weight at that level.

If we turn to the logic of argumentation, the strengthening of the connection between the grounds and the claim is achieved by adding credibility to it. In short, the author adds some kind of general observations – warrants – to guarantee that the grounds of the chosen sort should be used to support the claim. We may look on the warrants as some overarching rules or concepts for making arguments of this type. The warrants are the pillars of our imaginative bridge. If the distance to be travelled from one bank to the other is short, it may not be necessary to have any support for the structure. Its strength is self evident (the warrant is implicit). And there is not much of a gain for the traveller either. But what should one say about huge bridges? They do need support, but they offer such a gain!

Now, the pillars do not stand alone as a series of unsupported columns. They themselves are supported by some kind of foundation. The foundation underneath the warrants in argumentation is called backing. The backing is the support structure of our imaginative bridge if the warrant is disputed and needs a defence. To back a warrant is to root it in observations, experience, authority, and tradition. For evangelical theological study this warrant is the biblical story, with its witness to Christ. We may also ask

whether a narrated experience of an individual or community can also back some warrants? I am sure it can and it should.

There is another possibility. Instead of strengthening the bridge (in the case of the biblical claims we say this is not possible) we measure it properly and mark the allowed weight for the existing structure. The name for the strength of the connection between the grounds and the claim is the 'qualifier'. These qualifiers help us to move from the iron logic of deductive reasoning to the more mundane and productive logic of probability. We know that the biblical story is the ground from which we argue, but we do not know that all our deductions are right. The qualifiers are the 'load limit' signs on our bridge.

We have to admit that we are living in an age of doubt and questioning of any authority. It may be a reason to lament and yet on the other hand it may very well be a good reason for rejoicing. Why not free the mind? This brings us to the last element of the differential method - the rebuttals. As Nancey Murphy defines it, 'rebuttal (or potential rebuttal) is the part of the argument that acknowledges where and how the argument may lead to a wrong conclusion'.²³ By its nature, rebuttal is a critical tool. It can sometimes be a mechanism of the author's self-defence. It is a conscious search for the loopholes built into the argument. Most often it is the critic's approach to demolish an argument by questioning its grounds or warrants. The rebuttal is the 'wrong way' sign on the bridge.

This stage is not at all easy. We become defensive. As with the group loyalties and interests in the integrative method, we are, unfortunately, more readily prepared to see the speck in the other's (perhaps often the author's) eye than the log in our own. Logic is not always as objective as it claims. Perhaps one great contribution that seminary education can play is that it helps those being equipped to look at themselves and others in a different way. Such understanding can be a huge help to our ministries.

Conclusion

This article has set out two different approaches that govern the ways we think, study and relate to those around us. It has relevance to all areas of life and especially to the encounters between East and West. In the European Baptist context we need help to understand our differing traditions. What seems like a powerful story to one person can seem like an illogical set of statements to another. There is much more involved in the differential approach within theological education than has been set out here.²⁴ It is often the approach, which is assumed to be the right one. This

²³ Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion*, p. 36.

²⁴ For elaborated applications see Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion*, *passim*.

article has attempted to argue for the richness of the integrative approach, with special reference to seminary education in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, as one that takes very seriously questions of narrative, conviction and mission. Such issues are, of course, of concern to Baptists in every part of Europe. Ultimately East and West need not be in conflict. The conversation between us is a vital one. We complement one another.

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August 2000

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‘SPIRITUALITY AND THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION’

In March 2000 Dr Ian Randall gave the Annual Lecture at London Bible College on the subject of spirituality and theological education. For LBC, which has been the leading interdenominational evangelical theological college in Britain, the task of formation clearly involves the engagement of the mind. But what about the task of ensuring, in an intentional way, that there was a strong spiritual base for theological study being undertaken?

The British evangelical theologian, Alister McGrath has highlighted the paucity of evangelical institutions dedicated to promoting evangelical spirituality. All too often, McGrath suggested, the area of spirituality has been a massive blind spot for evangelicals. This has served to devalue the tradition of evangelical devotion. (A E McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*, pp. 137-8). There are many signs, however, that this has changed. Evangelical theological educators are becoming aware of new priorities. An article in the journal *Transformation* referred to recent research that has shown that people in the churches regard spirituality as the number one priority for pastors. (T Dearborn, ‘Preparing New Leaders for the Church of the Future’, *Transformation*, Vol. 12, pp. 7-12). This is a challenge for theological educators, theological students and church leaders. It would be useful to know more about how seminaries in various parts of Europe are tackling this important question.

The experience of London Bible College, where many Baptists have trained, is dealt with in Ian Randall’s *Educating Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000). He has also this year written a book on the Keswick Convention, where leading Baptists have been speakers. This is entitled *Transforming Keswick* (Carlisle: Paternoster/OM, 2000).

BOOK REVIEW

Paul G. Hiebert*Missiologological Implications of Epistemological Shifts**Affirming truth in a Modern/Postmodern World.*

Trinity Press, Harrisburg 1999.

ISBN: 1-56338-259-8. Price \$11.70

This volume is in the series *Christian Mission and Modern Culture*. In the introduction to this short book (126 pages without the bibliography), Hiebert clearly explains his reasons for writing. The book was born out of his own interest in intercultural ministries and the questions that were raised by those ministries. Basically his central question was: *'how should we do missions in an anticolonial, postmodern era characterized by religious relativism and accusations of Christian imperialism'* (introduction, xiv). His awareness of the epistemological foundations that underlay this changed his theology and anthropology. So we get an insight into Hiebert's own pilgrimage, seeking to integrate theology and anthropology in the context of mission.

Hiebert starts to spell out the characteristics of the dominant epistemological systems: positivism, instrumentalism and idealism. He describes these characteristics and their consequences for theology, anthropology and mission and gives a clear picture of the connection between, for example, positivism (with its emphasis on totally objective knowledge and the idea of progress) and modernity. He shows that modern society is based on a mechanistic model of organization built on the logic of positivism. Rational order, control, efficiency, production and profit become primary values (15). Reality is divided into two separate unrelated realms: the natural and the supernatural. He argues rightly that in this process secularization can be seen as demystification and desacralization of knowledge. Hiebert also points to the influence of positivism on mission. It partly defined the missionaries' gospel. He notes the 'divorce' of the cognitive and affective/moral dimensions of life. The Gospel was basically seen in terms of knowledge. Bible translations were focused on literal translation, rather than on contextualizing the text. In training schools the emphasis was on knowledge acquisition as central for ministry.

After dealing with instrumentalism and idealism, Hiebert proposes his own 'paradigm': critical realism. He calls it a 'middle ground position between positivism and instrumentalism' (68). It accepts and postulates the presence of objective truth but at the same time it is aware of the fact that this is subjectively apprehended. Hiebert argues that in the process of

mission different conceptual systems of knowledge (Kuhn would say 'paradigms') and different experiences can be brought together.

Intercultural understanding is therefore possible. This has consequences for the understanding of mission. First of all Hiebert holds the view that in the light of the globalization, mission history needs to be reevaluated. I think he is rightly pointing to this. There needs to be a balanced interpretation of the positive sides and the weaknesses of missionary work through the centuries. Secondly, Hiebert stresses (in the context of evangelism) the importance of bearing testimony to our faith, since critical realists have deep convictions about the truth. We *are* witnesses of the Good News! At the same time this involves respecting the convictions of others, we are not called to win arguments but to win people (1 Corinthians 9). Critical realism stimulates an approach which gives attention both to the deep human earthly needs and the need for salvation.

I would say that Hiebert has succeeded in writing a challenging book, shaking us awake about the underlying implicit assumptions on which our churches still function today. I would have appreciated a clearer picture of the practical implications of the 'critical realist' approach e.g. concerning methods of evangelism and in a broader sense mission strategies, but maybe that is too much for this little volume. I can warmly recommend reading Hiebert's book.

The Revd Dr René Erwich

Director of Mission and Evangelism, IBTS

Short notes about two books of relevance to European Baptists

Two important books have been published this year by Paternoster Press that open up areas of great interest for Baptists in Europe. These are in the Paternoster monograph series and are based on the doctoral dissertations of the authors.

Nigel Wright

Disavowing Constantine: Mission, Church and the Social Order in the theologies of John Howard Yoder and Jurgen Moltmann

Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000

ISBN: 0-853-64978-2. Price: GBP 19.99

Nigel G Wright, the Principal of Spurgeon's College, London, writes as someone who is thoroughly aware of the differing theological traditions that are represented by Yoder and Moltmann. He analyses the possibilities for the renewal of social and political theology offered by the Anabaptist and the Reformed traditions. Those who have read Wright's previous books, such as *Challenge to Change* or *The Radical Evangelical* will know the way in which his

thinking brings together theology and practice. This volume is essentially scholarly in its thrust, but those who want to gain insights for practical Christian witness in society will find this book most rewarding. It is likely to become a standard textbook for theological courses that take in issues of political theology.

Anthony R Cross

Baptism and the Baptists: Theology and Practice in Twentieth-Century Britain
Carlisle, Paternoster, 2000

ISBN: 0-853-64959-6. Price: GBP 29.99

Although this book by Anthony Cross has as its main focus British Baptist life, it is a book that raises issues of concern to all Baptists. Readers of *The Baptist Quarterly* will be aware of some of this material through articles Cross has written. The sacramental and ecumenical dimensions of the doctrine and practice of baptism are both very important for Baptists across Europe. This book is well worth studying as it brings into focus perspectives that are often missing in Baptist theology. It is a book that breaks new ground.

Directors' Conference at IBTS, Prague, August 18-24, 2001
Discipleship and Formation of Christian Character: A Baptist Vision

Current research in ethics, theology and philosophy emphasizes as never before the importance of the story, of community life and of practice for the formation of human character. What is the Baptist formative story? How does it transform Christian character? Can Baptist life and beliefs make any difference in the pluralistic and fractured world of post-communist and post-modern Europe?

In this conference we will be looking at the contours of Christian character, reflecting on the reality of the Kingdom of God, as seen in the Gospels and especially in the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. We will be examining the path of radical discipleship. The power of Christ's teaching radically to transform individuals and the believing community has been experienced by countless faithful believers since the resurrection of the Lord. They read the Bible together seeing themselves anew in the biblical story. They live out what they have learned together, practicing the life of obedience.

Given this as the foundation, the conference will join the efforts of theologians, ethicists, ministers, church leaders and church members together to explore practical applications for Baptist life and for society in the twenty-first century. Can our life and witness make a difference in the light of the pressures of fragmentation, relativism and pluralism, and in a society which ignores Christian virtues while seeking desperately for meaning in everyday life? The world does not trust words. Can it be convinced by the committed Baptist Christian life of integrity, compassion and loving care under the Lordship of Christ?

Academic/Educational Programmes at IBTS

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SPECIAL STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

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For more information visit our website on: <http://www.ibts.cz>

EBF Theological Educators' Biblical Studies Seminar in the Holy Land

26th February – 11th March 2001

Some scholarship assistance is available.

Contact Dr Wesley H Brown or Dr Cheryl A Brown at: cawhbrown@ibts.cz